

SPORTS

Exposing the grey area in CIAU rulesBY JORDAN PEARL
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TORONTO (CUP) — CIAU rules are made to be bent.

The Canadian Inter-University Athletics Union (CIAU), governing body for university sports in Canada, is currently reviewing their rules regarding university athletes playing professionally.

Dean Labayen, a third-year men's basketball player at York University, spent the first half of this season playing basketball in a professional league in the Philippines.

According to CIAU regulations, Section C.8.5a) "Any professional athlete may participate in

CIAU competition one calendar year from the date that the athlete last participated in a professional game or event in a sport."

This seems to put him in direct violation of the CIAU guidelines, punishable by one year's loss of eligibility.

But there is confusion as to what constitutes a professional league.

"In the past we have allowed Canada Basketball to make the distinction for us as far as what a professional league is," said Tom Huisman, Director of Operations and Development with the CIAU.

Yet Labayen will face no repercussions for playing profession-

ally. Why?

Ken Shildroff, president of the Men's Basketball Coaching Association, quotes a CIAU rule that states, "An athlete shall be classified professional if he has participated in a league that has been recognized as professional by the CIAU."

But the obscurity of this rule lies in the lack of defining a professional league.

"We as a basketball group have not recognized any league as professional," said Shildroff.

This contradiction in the rules allowed Labayen to play overseas. Due to this discrepancy the CIAU is in the process of providing a clear

definition to this rule.

York basketball head coach Bob Bain has been one of the principles in the creation of new rules to counter such situations. He says the allowance of professionals to play in the Olympics caused a diminishing presence of amateur leagues.

This caused a very murky situation for the CIAU because there were less leagues for their athletes to participate in.

In Labayen's case, the CIAU chalked up his salary to "living expenses", thereby avoiding professional status.

But there are other loopholes that players can use to bend the rule.

According to Bain, players can sign a contract to teach, play pro ball and still be declared eligible without teaching regularly because initially they were contracted to be instructors.

Meanwhile, university athletes remain uninformed of CIAU rules and requirements regarding involvement with professional leagues.

Neither Mike George nor Tom McChesney, starting guards for the York basketball team, were aware of the rules that do not allow a university athlete to compete in a professional league.

Bain concurs CIAU eligibility rules are not clear to student athletes.

"The major rules they [the athletes] know, the minor rules such as eligibility are fairly confusing and sometimes contradictory," he said.

While a player like Dean Labayen earned money by playing in the Philippines for a sum estimated to be anywhere between \$700 and \$12,000 a month, it's his absence at home that was felt the most.

Labayen only played in one game for York upon return due to injury, with the result that the University fell one game short of making the playoffs.

Shildroff, meanwhile, has promised new CIAU rules are in the works. It may be introduced as early as 2001 pending approval. Its sole purpose would be to fill the black hole Labayen was able to slip through breaching league rules without consequence.

The revised rules would be similar in nature to those of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) in the United States.

Bain, inspired by the situation with his star player, has stated that all of the loopholes will be closed.

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